

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR THE
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA, NORTHERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)	
)	CRIMINAL ACTION NO.
v.)	2:17cr6-MHT
)	(WO)
MATTHEW ELLIOTT SHASHY)	

OPINION AND ORDER

This cause is before the court on the question whether defendant Matthew Elliott Shashy has the mental capacity to stand trial, that is, whether he is currently suffering from a mental disease or defect rendering him mentally incompetent to the extent that he is not able to understand the nature and consequences of the proceedings against him or to assist properly in his defense. See 18 U.S.C. § 4241(a).

Dr. Lauren Reba-Harrelson, Ph.D., conducted an evaluation of Shashy's competence to stand trial, at the request of the defense. Dr. Reba-Harrelson concluded that, while he has a history of symptoms of

paranoid delusions as well as depression, which are consistent with his diagnosis of Schizoaffective Disorder, Bipolar Type, Shashy still has the ability to understand the nature and consequences of proceedings against him and to assist his legal counsel in his defense. She noted that he has a "fund of knowledge about legal processes, potential outcomes, and case-specific details," and the "ability [to] apply it in a logical manner to make reasoned decisions in the proceedings against him." Forensic Evaluation (doc. no. 37) at 16. During the evaluation, he "provided accurate descriptions of the adversarial process, roles of key courtroom personnel, and pleas, [and] various procedural outcomes and consequences"; he also "synthesized information about his case and legal procedures, sorted and weighed the strength of information he considered, then applied it in a logical manner to reach ... reasoned decisions." Id. As for his ability to assist his attorneys, Shashy "knew the role of his defense attorneys, said he trusted them,

[and] described being open with them about information pertaining to his case." Id. Finally, he evinced understanding that "continuing to take medication and participate in treatment is important to ensure ongoing abilities required to understand and participate in the legal process." Id. Neither the defense nor the government objects to the conclusion that Shashy is competent to proceed.

Therefore, based on Dr. Reba-Harrelson's evaluation, as well as the representations made by the parties during an on-the-record hearing on April 26, 2017, the court holds that Shashy is not suffering from a mental disease or defect rendering him mentally incompetent to the extent that he is not able to understand the nature and consequences of the proceedings against him or to assist properly in his defense.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that defendant Matthew Elliott Shashy is declared mentally competent to stand trial in this case.

DONE, this the 26th day of April, 2017.

/s/ Myron H. Thompson
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE